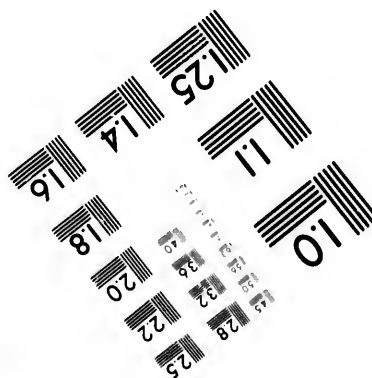
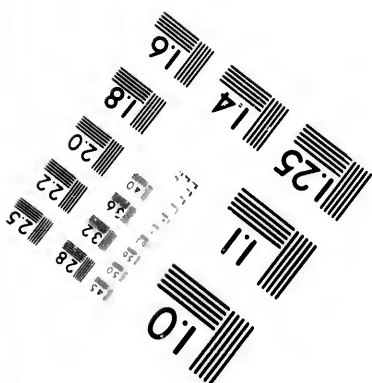
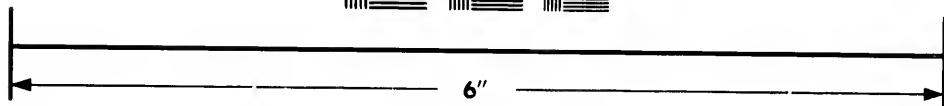
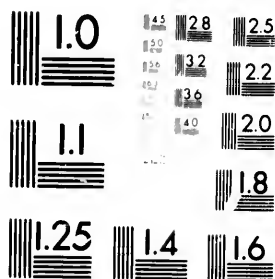


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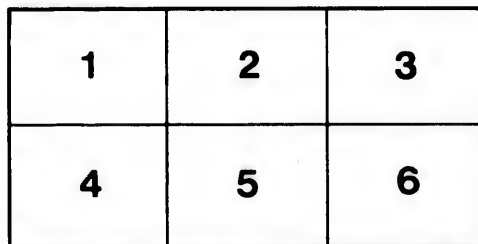
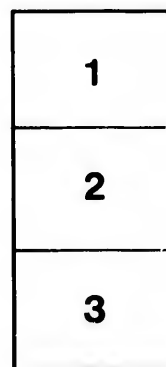
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*Interpreted by the Fathers
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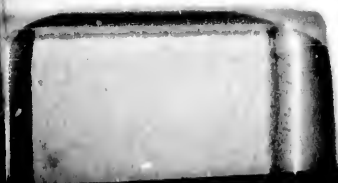
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TO THE READER.

When the following Essay appeared, in part, in the **WESLEYAN**, a few months ago, it was the writer's pleasure to have it kindly sanctioned by the Editor, immediately to be reprinted, and to be so prominently placed in the **WESLEYAN** as is now made. Want of leisure delayed the execution of this purpose, and in order that the work might be conveniently brought to the reader's notice, it is presented in a pamphlet, rather than in the form of separated News-paper articles, which might not have been fully collated.

There are several Authors have written at length upon the subject discussed, none have been directly consulted, excepting those whose works are a part of "the **COURSE OF STUDY** to be pursued by Candidates for our **MINISTERS**."

One among these, besides Wesley and Fletcher, is **Whedon**, whose Commentary is fast superseding those which have hitherto been most generally used by **Methodists**. And as this Commentary presents the best synopsis of the views advocated in this Essay, (Vide Notes on Matthew, 19. 14., Luke, 18. 16., John, 14. 19., Romans, 5. 18., 11. 32., Eph. 2. 3., &c.,) it may be desirable, in reply to an objection which has been made of its want of harmony with the older Standards of **Methodism**, to observe how cordially and unreservedly it is recommended by the leading publications of **British Methodism**.

The **WESLEYAN M. MAGAZINE** says, editorially, "Of the numerous popular and portable Commentaries which have appeared, this is undoubtedly the best."

* * * * *

In all the qualifications essential to a Commentator Dr. Whedon is second to none, so that he may be regarded as *a safe and sure guide* of the inspired Word.

The CITY ROAD MAGAZINE also says, edited by Dr. Whedon, "Indeed it is not too much to say that the Commentary upon Romans is a work of *sanctified exegesis*. Trained scholarship, keenly accurate judgment, powerful original thinking, minute carefulness of detail, produced an exposition as fresh and startling as it is truthful and vigorous."

Judging from the expressions of surprise and approval with which this Essay, as published in the WESLEYAN was met, the writer regards the appearance of it as very opportune. Surely it is time for the Methodist to return to the horn-books of his early days, to whom it is needful to say, as did Fletcher, in his reply to his opponents, he proved from the Scriptures the very truth for which we contend, "I could speak as the oracles of God without expounding the truth of the gospel to the smiles of Christian professors."

That the truth "may have free course and full dominion," is the prayer which accompanies this humble effort towards its dissemination.

Pictou, N. S., Feb., 1876.

RELATION OF CHILDREN TO JESUS.

religious culture of the young, occupies to-day a place of unprecedented importance in the sacred labor of the Christian Church. We should soon abandon the Prayer-Meeting, or the early school, in the ordinary acceptance of that term, as the honored Sabbath School.

It has become a custom in some quarters to displace the morning sermon and the school, in one service, in which parents and children meet for the united study of the word of God, the exercises closing with the exposition of the day's lesson, and other appropriate Scripture, by the parents. It is more than probable that such a method of spending the morning hours of the Sabbath would be, in many cases, for the advantage of all concerned. It would be of advantage to the children by giving a prominence to their religious training which is not generally secured, and by habituating them to regular attendance upon the Public Worship of God; whereas, it is a lamentable fact that many of them are now found only in the Sabbath School. It would be of advantage to parents by saving them to a more careful and consecutive

home-study of the Scriptures. It would be of advantage to the Pastor by enabling him to compass in his preaching a wider range of truth and make his preaching more expository than is usually possible, thereby better accomplishing one of the grand objects of preaching, namely, to make the hearers familiar with truth in all its various phases. Such a custom also appears to conform closely to the habit of the primitive Church, for, it was not until the fourth or fifth century of our era, that the sermon, as we understand that term, was introduced.

But, the design of all the Agencies of the Church, in their relation to children, is to train them up for God; and back of the question as to the manner in which these Agencies may be most successfully employed, is the question we now propose to consider; the question of the relation which children sustain to Jesus, in virtue of which we expect them *dying to be saved, or, living to be trained up to an early exhibition of the blossoms and fruits of genuine piety.*

It has come to be regarded, practically, as a fact, by the different branches of the Protestant Church, that all children dying in infancy are saved. The Westminster Confession of Faith says, "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ, through the Spirit, who worketh when, where and how He pleaseth." The logical inference from this assertion is that non-elect infants, dying in infancy, are not regenerated and saved.

and that such was the belief of the framers of that Confession, and, generally, of that school of religious thinkers, in former times, cannot be reasonably disputed. Occasionally of late years, though we believe comparatively rarely, the same opinion has found expression in the pulpit. The present writer once heard a prominent and well known Minister attempt to emphasize and justify the awful announcement, almost in these exact words, "We may say, poor little things, poor little things, and may pity their condition, but, it is written in the Word of God, and we cannot get over it."

We have however, the testimony of a Presbyterian divine, that "the theologians who hold to this (Westminster) Confession (now) generally maintain that all infants (who die in infancy) are elect, and many of them think that this article in the Confession would express the truth more clearly if the word "elect" were omitted. It is omitted in the Confession of Faith as amended by the Cumberland Presbyterian Church."

According to this interpretation the article referred to is now generally understood to mean, infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved &c., and thus corresponds *de facto* with Arminian views.

But, what shall we say of children who live and for whose Christian nurture and training we are so largely responsible? What relation do they sustain to Christ? Is the salvation of the dying child accomplished by a special work of grace in view of

death, while the living child is left in a state of condemnation until an age is reached, when personal faith and obedience are possible? Or, are all children, through Christ, free from condemnation, and, therefore, in a gracious state of meetness for heaven, until guilty of actual sin?

If we can arrive at the Scriptural answer, we will be led to a more intelligent and adequate consolation in the one case, and, in the other case, to a more successful use of the necessary means of Christian training.

“AS CHRIST IS AT LEAST EQUAL TO ADAM, IT FOLLOWS, THAT AS ADAM BROUGHT A GENERAL CONDEMNATION, AND A UNIVERSAL SEED OF DEATH UPON ALL INFANTS ; SO CHRIST BRINGS UPON THEM A GENERAL JUSTIFICATION AND A UNIVERSAL SEED OF LIFE.”—*John Fletcher*.

We regard it as incontrovertible, that every one born into the world inherits a sinful nature. The sad consequences of the first sin are universal. Pain, suffering, and sinful tendencies, are manifest with the first development of human faculties. But, a Saviour has been provided, and, wide-reaching as is the influence of sin, so wide-reaching is the influence of His atonement.

These two great truths are thus placed in antithesis to each other, in “the most complete composition of the greatest Apostle,” (Rom. 5, 18. 19.), “As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation ; even so by the righteousness

of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made (i. e., "constituted, or, assigned the position of") sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made (i. e., "constituted, or, assigned the position of") righteous." Here is the broad truth that by the sin of Adam, the sentence of death has been pronounced upon the entire human race and that all are thus constituted, or, assigned the position of sinners. But, here is also another equally broad truth, that by the righteousness of Jesus Christ, the entire human race, is placed in a position of "justification of life", and, that all are thus constituted, or, assigned the position of righteous.

"This justification, which comes upon all men in their infancy, is certainly previous to anything we can do to find it; for it always prevents us, saying to us in our very infancy, Live, and in consequence of it, our Lord says, let little children come unto me for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven".—Fletcher's Appeal and Fourth Check.

Dr. Whedon, in his notes upon the above passage, presents the contract expressed in its antithetical clauses in these words;—"From Adam's offence resulted condemnation upon all men; from Christ's righteousness, justification upon all men. The condemnation would have produced the exclusion of the race from existence by the infliction of immediate death upon Adam. But, the justification of all, in view of the atonement secured the continuity

of the race, by which every person comes into the world in a justified state." The same writer elsewhere illustrates this last remark, as follows ;—
 "The true statement would be that they (infants) are born into the world depraved, but, as Fisk expresses it, the atonement meets them with its provisions at their entrance. Their justification, or, regeneration, so far as it exists is not congenital, but, postgenital. The atonement fills this probationary world with its influence, and, the human being receives his atoning justification, consequent upon his entering into it. It is as if a room were filled with a purifying influence, and, a leper is cleansed by entering within its walls."

Now, we believe that every child taken away from the earth in the period of its infancy, in virtue of this "justification of life," goes to swell the number of the saved, and be a star in the Redeemer's crown forever ; and, also, that every child who lives, continues in the enjoyment of this "justification of life," until by an act of his own free will, he voluntarily refuses the good and chooses the evil. Dr. Wilber Fisk, referring to those who grow up in Christian lands, expresses the thought thus ; "Guilt is not imputed, until by a voluntary rejection of the Gospel remedy, man makes the depravity of his nature the object of his own choice." The more general truth, applicable alike to heathen and Christian youth, is thus stated by Fletcher ; "when infants grow up, they are called to believe in the light of

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their dispensation, and, till they do, their personal sins condemn them."

Religious biography abundantly confirms, in our opinion, the statement that there are instances in which children have never lost this "justification of life." By careful instruction and guidance their feet have been kept in the way of life, and, there is no remembrance of a time when they did not enjoy a conscious assurance of the love of God. They have never had such an experience of sin as to make a separation between God and them, more than that which any adult person, though in a justified state, may experience, and, consequently, they cannot point to a period, as the majority of converted persons can, when by the operation of the Divine Spirit upon their hearts, they were changed from a state of nature to a state of grace.

"ADULTS ARE PERSONAL OFFENDERS, INFANTS NOT; AND THE VERY WISDOM OF GOD MAY ASSURE US, THAT, IN PRESCRIBING THE TERMS OF SALVATION, * * * THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PERSONS MUST BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT. THE REASON OF PARDON, IN EVERY CASE, IS NOT REPENTANCE, NOT FAITH, NOT ANYTHING DONE BY MAN, BUT, THE MERIT OF THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST.—*Watson's Instil.*

It may be objected, that the views we have expressed, do not harmonize with Scripture teaching, respecting the necessity of becoming "a new creature" of being "born again," and, of being "converted" for, if a child may retain the justification of its infancy,

there need be no subsequent necessity for the change which is indicated by these phrases.

To illustrate our idea of the relation such Scriptures sustain to the opinion we advocate, we refer the reader to the Great Commission ; "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature ; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.*" Mark, 16, 15. 16.

If we are to interpret these words in their widest significance, we, at once, exclude every infant, dying in infancy, from the possibility of salvation ; for, such an infant "believeth not," and, therefore, "shall be damned." From this conclusion, we shrink with horror. It is worthy of remark, as a historic fact, that Ambrose, Augustine, and others of the church Fathers, made a corresponding mistake in their interpretation of the words of Jesus to Nicodemus, "*except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.*" Taking this statement in its widest sense, they said, all unbaptized children must be excluded from the Kingdom of God ; though, as if to mitigate the harshness of such a conclusion, they assigned to them the mildest grade of perdition. This error was the result of a want of consideration of the circumstances of the persons. We at once see the necessity of a similar consideration in the case of the Saviour's last command, and, consequently, of limiting its direct application to those who have attained such a

maturity of understanding as renders personal faith in Christ possible. In like manner, we must limit the direct application of the phrases before quoted, to those who have lost the justification of infancy, and, therefore, need a renewal, or, we may say another renewal, of their nature, by the power of the Spirit of God. And, this phrase, *another renewal*, will occasion no surprise to one, familiar with Fletcher's remarks, that, all who are lost "forfeit their initial salvation," by their own sin; and, all who enter the heavenly glory, are saved, "*by keeping the free gift* which is come unto all men," or, "*by recovering* through faithful obedience to re-converting grace."—F. & G. Creed.

Any other opinion of the relation of children to Jesus, than that here urged, involves in difficulty and doubt, the familiar saying of the Saviour four times repeated, in substance, in the Gospel, "SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME, AND FORBID THEM NOT, FOR OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD."

For example, examine this saying in the light of the opinion, that a child is justified and regenerated, only on condition of its dying in infancy. Then, we must take one horn of the following dilemma; either, we must believe that only these children who were there in the Saviour's presence, not all children, are spoken of and that they were all justified because they were to die in infancy, or, we must believe that Jesus spoke, not of children

themselves as members of the kingdom of God, but, of certain characteristics of childhood, as finding a resemblance in adult Christians. Which alternative will we choose? Will we say Jesus meant only some children, or, that He was only employing a bold figure of speech? Did he not certainly intend a deeper meaning than either of these alternatives would imply?

Or, examine the saying in the light of the opinion, which appears to have been invented in order to avoid the legitimate conclusion to which the Saviour would lead us, viz., the opinion, that, "regeneration is not the condition of admission into the Church of Christ," and, that, therefore, both children and adults may be in the kingdom of God, and, yet, not in any sense justified or regenerate.

On this ground we have the spectacle of Jesus holding up as models to which His disciples must conform the unjustified and unregenerate! A view we cannot admit, because self-contradictory.

As a lucid, and to us a convincing, exposition of our Saviour's meaning, we give the following extract from Watson's "Note" on Matthew, 19. 14. "That the kingdom (of God, or Heaven) signifies the spiritual kingdom of Christ on earth, and also that glorious reign of God over redeemed and glorified men in the future world, are points not to be disputed; and, the words of our Lord, if they relate to one, must relate to both. If little children are the subjects of his spiritual kingdom

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on earth, then, until the moment that by actual sin, they bring personal condemnation upon themselves, they remain heirs of the kingdom of eternal glory; and, if they become subjects of the latter by dying, then a previous vital relation must have existed on earth between them and Christ, as their Redeemer and Sanctifier; or else, we must assign the sanctification of the nature of man, which even in infants is fallen and corrupt, to a future state, which is contrary to the Scriptures."

To this exposition there is a natural and necessary conclusion. All children are "members of the spiritual kingdom of Christ on earth." As members of this kingdom, the true Church, they are morally qualified for membership. The Scriptural terms by which the corresponding qualification for adults is designated, are justification, regeneration and adoption. Children, therefore, before the period of actual sin, possess a moral qualification for membership in the kingdom of God, which is the same for them as that which in adults is indicated by these terms.

We now turn to consult more fully the acknowledged

DOCTRINAL STANDARDS OF METHODISM,

and, we will find that Wesley, Fletcher and Watson, (the latter under certain conditions, which will be noticed,) acting upon the axiom that things which are equal to the same thing are

equal to one another, employ **THE SAME TERMS** WHEN SPEAKING OF THAT STATE OF FAVOR AND ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD IN WHICH CHILDREN STAND, AS THEY DO IN THE CASE OF ADULT CHRISTIANS.

As the Scriptural doctrines chiefly involved are those of Human Depravity, and, "Justification with its attendant blessings," our remarks will be embraced under these two heads.

HUMAN DEPRAVITY.

According to the teaching of our Standard writers, the very continuance of the human race, after Adam's sin, is conditioned upon the promise of a Saviour. Were it not for such a promise, the full sentence of death would have been immediately executed, and, the human race would have ended where it began.

"What the race would have been, had not the redeeming plan been brought in, the Scriptures no where tell us, except that a sentence of death to be executed "in the day" in which the first pair sinned, was the sanction of the law under which they were placed; and, it is great presumption to assume it as a truth that they would have multiplied their species only for eternal destruction. That the race would have been propagated under an absolute necessity of sinning, and, of being made eternally miserable, we may boldly affirm to be impossible; because, it supposes an administration contradicted by every attribute

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which the Scriptures ascribe to God."—*Watson's Instit. Vol. 2. Page 59.*

"As we sinned only *seminally* in Adam, if God had not intended our redemption, His goodness would have engaged Him to destroy us *seminally*, by crushing the capital offender who contained us all; so there would have been a just proportion between the sin and the punishment; for, as we sinned in Adam without the least consciousness of guilt, so we should have been punished without the least consciousness of pain."—*Fletcher, 3rd. Check.*

Human beings, therefore, come into the world "under a constitution of mercy which actually existed before their birth"; and, "until the moment that by actual sin, they bring personal condemnation upon themselves, they remain heirs of the Kingdom of eternal glory".

If it be asked, how this differs from Pelagian, or, Semi-Pelagian theories of the natural innocence, or, angelic sinlessness of childhood, as, e. g., that of Dr. Taylor, to whom Mr. Wesley's "Treatise on Original sin" is a reply; we answer, the difference is very great. Dr. Taylor taught, and his theory contains the substance of all those to which we have referred, that "no evil but temporal death came upon men in consequence of Adam's sin." Methodism follows the Scripture in teaching that temporal death is only one consequence of Adam's sin; other consequences are, "the being born into the world with a corrupt

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nature, always tending to actual offence, and, the conditional liability to eternal death."

It may again be asked, if the atonement meet the human being at the very dawn of life, so that he is justified, does not this imply a removal of his depravity; and can we judge of the purity of heaven by the temper of an infant's mind? We reply, by no means. These questions incorrectly suppose that no depravity can exist in a justified nature. We cannot judge of the purity of heaven by the mind of any Christian adult. There is enough depravity there to lead him every day to confess himself a sinner before God. In the highest state of grace on earth there is depravity sufficient, if allowed to have its sway, to lead to a falling from grace and to the end of a cast-away. Our natural depravity is never totally removed until heaven is gained. Then, if depravity does exist in a justified adult, may it not also exist in a justified infant?

A justified adult is conscious of the presence of an "enemy within." Children whose powers are just-developing, are conscious of the same "enemy within." If properly instructed and nurtured, they may begin to conquer this enemy with the first consciousness of his presence, and, may never, by yielding to his stratagems, experience a greater separation from God, than a justified adult may experience. If uninstructed and unnurtured, they fall an easy prey, as we believe many justifi-

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And adults to have done, through ignorance, un-
watchfulness and neglect to seek divine aid.

And, it may be here remarked, that Fletcher's
views, which are, in substance those of this Essay,
are found in his "Appeal;" a work which Armin-
ians have always properly regarded as presenting
the Scriptural idea of human depravity most un-
answerably, the coincidence proving that in his
opinion, there is no want of harmony between the
two doctrines.

It will be observed, by a comparison of quota-
tions, already given, that Dr. Fisk agrees precise-
ly with Watson, so far as these quoted statements
are concerned. But, as the statement of the form-
er has been strangely construed into a denial of
depravity, except such as is one's own making,
we refer to it again, "Guilt is not imputed, until
by a voluntary rejection of the Gospel-remedy,
man makes the depravity of his nature, the object
of his own choice." So far is this language from
denying human depravity, that it most clearly
implies the very opposite conclusion. For, how
can it be said that "man makes the depravity of
his nature the object of his own choice," if his
nature be not depraved. And, the fact that this
depravity is "of his own nature" no more proves
it to be of his own making, than the fact that his
affections are a part of his nature, proves them to
be of his own making. And, as a man may choose
to be guided by his malevolent affections, so he

may choose to be guided by the depravity of nature, as a whole.

JUSTIFICATION WITH ITS ATTENDANT BLESSINGS

We presume it will not be doubted, that a child dying in infancy, must be justified, regenerated and adopted, in order to its admission to heaven. Such is the opinion, we believe of all the grand Sections of the Christian Church. The Westminster "Confession" distinctly declares it, and, so do our own doctrinal Standards. Watson remarks, "All the mystery in the case arises from this, that in adults we see the 'free gift' connected with its end, actual justification, by acts of their own, repentance and faith; but, as to infants we are not informed by what process justification with its attendant blessings, is actually bestowed, though the words of the Apostles are express, that through 'the righteousness of one,' they are entitled to it. Nor is it surprising that this process should be hidden from us, since the Gospel was written for adults, though the benefit of it is designed for all; and, the knowledge of this work of God, in the spirit of an infant, must presuppose an acquaintance with the properties of the human soul, which is, in fact out of our reach."—*Instit. Vol. 2, Page 59.*

Now, if we do not regard it absurd or impossible for a dying child to become partaker of "justification with its attendant blessings," we should not regard it as absurd or impossible, for any

Up to the very moment of death, a dying child possesses no mental or moral capabilities, which a living child does not possess, and, whatever spiritual condition or qualification is possible in the one case, is possible also in the other. And, so far as we can discover, the Fathers of Methodism, with one possible exception, are clear in their testimony, not only as to the possibility, but, as to the fact, that all children occupy in the favor of God, a position corresponding to that which in adults is called by the names of justification, regeneration and adoption. The one possible exception to whom we refer is

RICHARD WATSON.

This author seems, in the *Institutes*, to advocate the opinion, that "justification with it attendant blessings," is only bestowed upon children in the case of their death in infancy. In his exposition of Romans, 5. 18., we meet this remark; the free gift "did not come immediately upon children, whether they die in infancy or not," and, subsequently, it "is actually applied in the case of all those dying in infancy." The inference is, that the "free gift" is only applied in immediate antecedence to their dying, and, prepares them for that event.

Now, we are greatly puzzled in our attempt to harmonize this opinion with other statements of the same author. For example, in his exposition, before quoted, of Matthew 19. 14., he says, "If

little children are the subjects of His spiritual kingdom on earth, (which he does not question, then, until the moment that by actual sin, they bring personal condemnation upon themselves, they *remain heirs of the Kingdom of eternal glory.*) He is here speaking of all children, and we are led to ask, if all children "*remain heirs,*" &c., must they not be in a state of acceptance with God? Is not our heirship conditional upon our adoption, ("if children, *then heirs,*") and, if adopted must they not be justified? What, then, becomes of the idea that they are justified only on condition of dying in infancy? In the same note, Watson says, children sustain "a spiritual relation to Christ;" "this relation is *not merely a nominal, but, a vital and beneficial one,*" "should they die before *forfeiture of this grace,*" they are admitted to the "felicities of immortal life in His perfected kingdom above." But, we ask, how can these things be, if the free gift does not come immediately on all children? Is not a "vital" relation to Christ a justifying one? Is not a "grace," only forfeited by actual sin, and fitting its possession for the happiness of heaven, a justifying grace? A similar difficulty elsewhere meets us.

See *Institutes*, Vol. 2, P. 60. "As to their *future state* He seems also to present a sufficiently encouraging view, when He says, 'Of such is the kingdom of heaven.'" We stop to ask, is their *future state* to which Jesus here refers

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Watson adds, "Whether we understand this (Of such, &c.) of future felicity, or, of the Church, the case is settled; in neither case can they be under wrath and liable to condemnation." He afterwards remarks, "all the children brought to Christ were not liable to die in infancy." The question arises, what is the moral state of those who would not die in infancy? He has just said, they are not "under wrath and liable to condemnation," but according to his theory, they could not be justified except in case of death in infancy. Is not an impossible moral state here implied? If not "under wrath and liable to condemnation", must they not be in a justified state?

We confess our inability to solve the problem of this evident inconsistency. If the only difficulty were in the "Institutes" versus the "Notes" we might suppose that the latter, being last written, expressed the matured judgment of the author, but, it is not so, and, the difficulty remains. All we can say is, that Watson does not argue on this point with his usual clearness and cogency, though, in his expositions, he generally admits, as we will see, all that Fletcher would demand.

But, beyond these considerations, where is the Scriptural proof that the Holy Spirit distinguishes between a dying and a living child, and, performs for the first a special work of grace, which He does not perform for the other? The only special references to the influence of the Holy Spirit

infant heart, with which we are acquainted, are in the case, not of children who died in infancy, but, of those who lived to maturity.

JOHN FLETCHER,

unequivocally interprets the Scriptures as teaching that the 'free gift' does come immediately upon all children, conferring on all "justification with its attendant blessings." This is, indeed, one of the great arguments, both of the "Appeal" and, the "Checks." So confidently does he rest in this belief that he replies to his opponents, who charged him with inventing a new justification, "you are both conscious that your two favorite doctrines will appear empty dreams, if the doctrine of the *justification of all infants* without faith is true."

Of his "four degrees, which make up a glorified saints eternal justification", upon which he dwells, at great length, in his *Fourth Check*, the first is that "which passes upon *all infants universally*, and, is thus described by St. Paul, 'As *by the offence*' &c. Rom. 5. 18. This, he calls "a universal seed of life," "the imputation of righteousness to them," and, also, "the washing of all mankind white in the blood of the Lamb, from the guilt of original sin, so as to remit the eternal punishment of it."

Of this he says, "God *absolutely* wills that *all men* should be *unconditionally* saved with au

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initial salvation: and, *initially* saved."—*F. & G. Creed.*

These are strong words, but, they are Scriptural, and, as free from universalism on the one hand, as, from fatalism on the other.

In the *Fourth Check*, he regards himself as having proved "the justification of all infants," and, upon this ground rests his belief in the salvation of those who die in infancy, clearly proving, what is elsewhere evident, that this "general justification" implies a preparedness for heaven, and, of course, regeneration.

The reader is requested to notice a previous quotation from this author, in support of the phrase, *another renewal*, and, we here add the following, from the same source, on the same point, in exposition of Romans, 5. 19.; "Hence it is that righteousness is imputed to all infants, and, that, as I have proved, they stand justified before God, according to the inferior dispensation they are under. When they grow up, and, hold the truth in unrighteousness, by sinning against their light, personal iniquity is imputed to them; and, till they *believe again*, in the light, and, renounce the evil deeds which it reproveth, they are condemned already. But, the moment they truly repent, and unfeignedly believe the Gospel belonging to their dispensation, condemnation vanishes. God *again imputes righteousness* to them, that is, for Christ's sake, He *again pardons their sins*, accepts their persons, and, considers them as branches that admit the righteous sap of

—*Fourth Check.* "...near the fruits of righteousness."

What does this mean, if not that EVERY UNREGENERATE ADULT IS VIRTUALLY A BACKSLIDER, that he was once a VIRTUAL BELIEVER, in a PARDONED STATE, and, consequently a regenerate and adopted child of God.

JOHN WESLEY

expresses substantially the same opinion. Referring to his own case, he records the conviction that he did not sin away "THE WASHING OF THE HOLY GHOST," of which his baptism in infancy was the outward sign until he was about ten years of age. Being then removed from parental oversight, and, exposed to evil influences, in a boarding-school, he was led into wilful sin.—*Works, Vol. 1. Page 98.*

His godly father was so fully convinced of his childhood piety, that, he admitted him, at the age of eight years, to the Sacramental table. When about the same age, Wesley was attacked by small-pox, and, his pious mother's testimony, expressed in a letter to his father, who was absent, in London, is, "Jack has borne his disease bravely, like a man, and, indeed, like a Christian, without complaint."

To Wesley's own testimony, we add Dr. Whedon's digest of his belief, as expressed and implied in the "Notes upon the New Testament." Wesley "held 'the kingdom of God' to be 'the kingdom set up in the world,' (see his comment on Mark, 10. 14., and Matthew, 19. 14.,) that is the regenerate earthly

Church; he held that little children have a right to enter' that kingdom or Church; and that 'the members of the kingdom' 'are such,' that is, 'natural' children, or 'grown persons of a childlike spirit.' That membership he interprets to be not contingent and prospective, or conditioned upon death, but, real and present. And yet he believed that no one can be within that kingdom who is not regenerate. (See his Note on John 3. 5.) We have then the syllogistic premises: All members of the kingdom of heaven are regenerate; Children are such members; and then what conclusion a logician like Mr. Wesley would draw, we leave others to decide."

For the use of his societies, Wesley selected, from the Thirty Nine Articles of Religion, of the Established Church of England, such as he approved of, and, in these, now used universally in Methodism, as well as in that part of our Catechism which treats of Baptism, the preceding opinions are endorsed.

OUR SEVENTEENTH ARTICLE OF RELIGION

reads thus, "Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference, whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized, but, it is also a sign of regeneration, or the new birth. The baptism of young children is to be retained in the Church."

We then administer baptism to an adult as a sign of the regeneration which we have reason to believe has taken place. Of what is it a sign in the case of an infant? Is it a sign of a re-

... believe the infant will enjoy
in case of death in infancy, or which we hope it
will enjoy if spared to the time of personal ac-
countability? Does the ordinance mean one
thing in the case of the adult, and another thing
in the case of the infant? Most certainly it
does mean two things, unless there is virtually in
both cases the same spiritual state. This is the
interpretation which Fletcher in the "Appeal"
puts upon the "Article" in question. And
Whedon says, "If Fletcher's interpretation be
true, WE HAVE BEEN PROCLAIMING LIVING INFANT
REGENERATION AT EVERY INFANT BAPTISM FROM
THE VERY FOUNDATION OF OUR CHURCH."

Compare with the foregoing "Article," the
purport of baptism as expressed in our Catechism
under the heading

OF THE SACRAMENTS.

Observe the following answers to corresponding
questions. "The inward and spiritual grace
signified by baptism is our being cleansed from
sin and made new creatures in Christ Jesus."
"The actual privilege of baptised persons are
these: they are made members of the *visible*
Church of Christ; their gracious relation to
Him as the second Adam, and as the Mediator of
the New Covenant is solemnly *ratified*, by divine
appointment; and they are hereby *recognized* as
having a claim to all those spiritual blessings of
which they are the proper subjects."

Do these statements refer to adults only? Must we construct a new Catechism, or add an Appendix to the present one to teach us what baptism means in the case of infants? We say, no. Then, the baptism of infants, as well as of adults, is a sign of an inward and spiritual grace actually bestowed, "of which they are the proper subjects," and the relation thus ratified is in both cases a present and not a prospective one, and by baptism their claim to all those blessings is not made, but, RECOGNIZED, in the way of divine appointment.

We refer finally to the

DISCIPLINE OF OUR CHURCH,

which points out to us the true basis upon which the Scriptural practice of infant baptism rests.

"We hold that all children, by virtue of the unconditional benefits of the atonement, are members of the kingdom of God, and *therefore*, graciously entitled to baptism." In other words all children are entitled to baptism, *because*, they are members of the kingdom of God. To be members of that kingdom is, as we have seen, to be "subjects of His spiritual kingdom," to be "heirs of the kingdom of eternal glory," to hold "a vital and beneficial" relation to Jesus; in other words, to be partakers of "justification with its attendant blessings." The logical inference then is that all children are entitled to baptism on the same ground upon which adults are so entitled. This vital relation to Jesus

of actual sin. When they are so guilty, they must seek forgiveness through the same Divine mercy which met their case at the very commencement of their existence, "not imputing to them original sin unto eternal death, and blotting out their personal transgressions in the moment they believe with the heart unto righteousness."

PRACTICAL.

We now see the rational and Scriptural ground of comfort to those who mourn the death in infancy of their children. It has been estimated that taking together all the centuries of human history and all countries, half, or more than half of the entire human race have died before the period at which personal responsibility begins. These through the mercy of God in Christ are all safely treasured up in heaven. Satan is robbed at once of more than half his expected prey, and angels rejoice over these trophies of the Redeemer's victory. When death comes, as he often does into the garden of the family and cuts off the buds, just blooming into the consciousness of life and love, we may smile in the midst of our tears as we listen to his words,—

"My Lord has need of these flowerets gay,"

The Reaper said, and smiled;

"Dear tokens of His life are they,
When He was once a child."

"They all shall bloom in fields of light
Transplanted by my care;

And saints upon their garments white,
These sacred blossoms wear."

we may add, with Harvey, in his "Meditations among the Tombs;" "Consider this, ye weeping parents, and dry up your tears. Perhaps the Supreme Disposer of events foresaw some inevitable snare of temptation forming, or some dreadful storm of adversity impending. And why should you be dissatisfied with that kind precaution, which has rescued your pleasant plant, and removed into shelter a tender flower, before the thunders roared, before the lightning flew, before the tempest poured its rage. O, remember, they are not lost, but, taken away from the evil to come."

To those whose Commission in part, is, "Feed the Lambs," and especially to parents whose children are spared to years of responsibility, it will appear that the views we have advanced give increased emphasis to the inspired command, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

It is not our present purpose to speak at any length of the manner in which this work of training may be best accomplished. It will satisfy us, if that we believe to be the Scriptural teachings of Wesley, Fletcher and others of our Arminian Authorities, are allowed to exercise their legitimate influence upon the Christian and parental heart.

In that case, the result may lead us all to say, as old Jonathan Edwards, when he had witnessed so many evidences of genuine childhood piety, in connection with the great revival in which he took so prominent a part, "THERE IS NOT BEFORE GOD, SO

MUCH DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHILDREN AND
PERSONS, AS WE ARE APT TO IMAGINE." And
there is administered to our children that S
ment whose element is the sign of an inward
spiritual grace, we will sing intelligently, as well
thankfully,

“ Jesus the ancient-faith confirms,
To our great Father given ;
He takes our children to his arms,
And calls them *heirs of heaven.*”



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